



The President's Daily Brief

May 8, 1976

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY



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LEBANON: *Ilyas Sarkis, the candidate backed by the Syrians and the Christian Phalanges Party, seems likely to become the new president today, if the cease-fire holds and parliament can convene for the election.*

Early this morning security in Beirut seemed tight enough, but fighting is heavy in the mountains northeast of the capital and could provoke flare-ups elsewhere.

Leftist leader Kamal Jumblatt failed in his last-minute bid for a postponement of the election. As a result, he and his preferred candidate, Raymond Edde, have announced they will boycott the parliamentary session, which probably means that at least 16 deputies will not participate in the vote.

A simple majority of the 98-member assembly constitutes a quorum, but Edde and Jumblatt--exploiting an ambiguity in the constitution--argue that two thirds of the membership is required for the presidential vote.



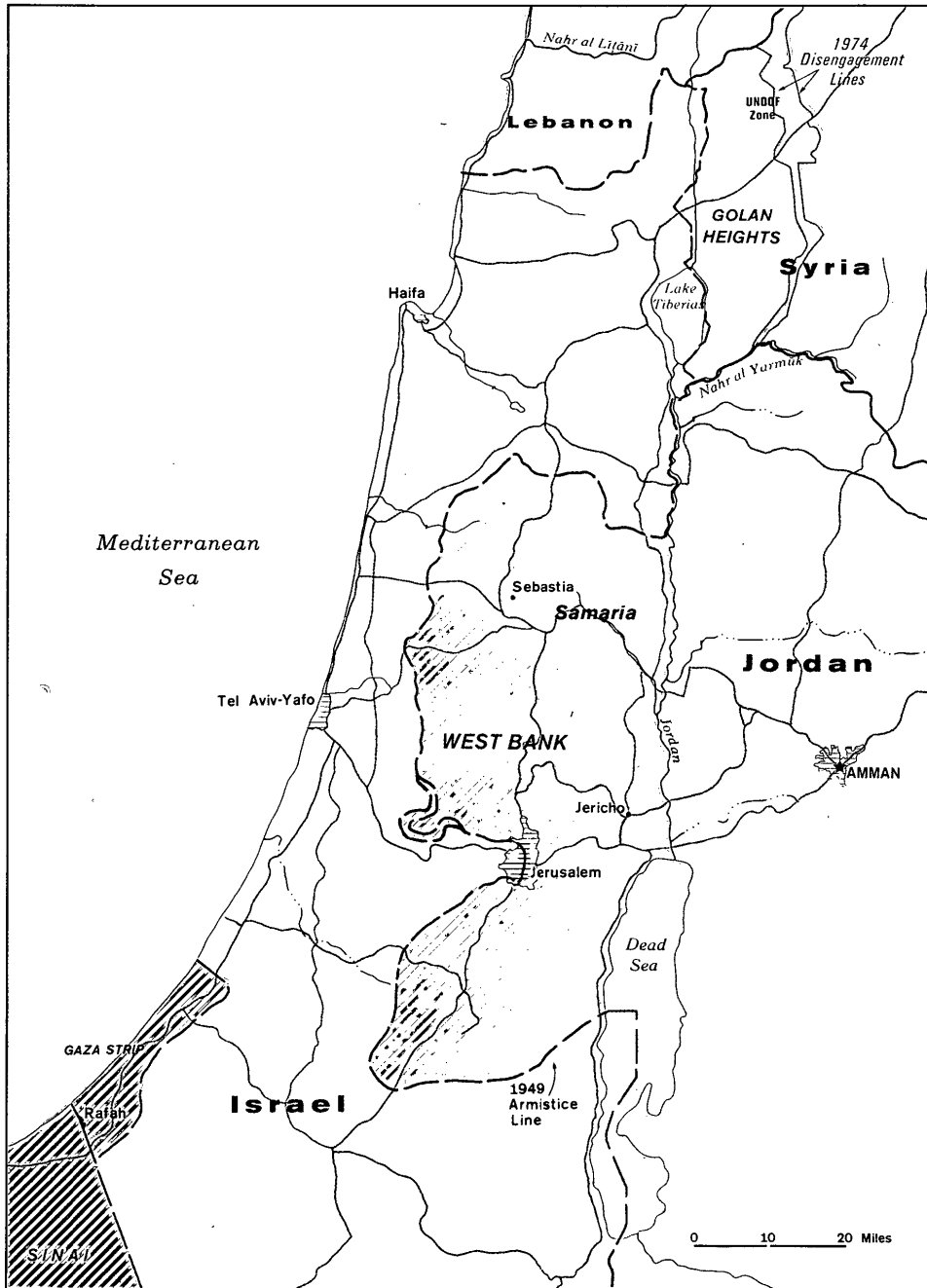
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ISRAEL: *Prime Minister Rabin's coalition probably will remain intact after the cabinet's policy debate tomorrow regarding Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, but the debate itself will produce further tensions among the Arab population.*

The National Religious Party has threatened to leave the coalition if the government tries to evict some 100 squatters who have set up an unauthorized settlement in Samaria. The left-wing Mapam Party has threatened to vote against the government if the squatters are not evicted.

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Rabin has been working on a compromise that will offer the Samaria settlers the option of moving to an authorized site elsewhere in the occupied territories. It stands a reasonable chance of being accepted by the coalition.

Whatever the outcome, the Arabs are likely to view the debate as further proof that Israel is bent on establishing a permanent Jewish presence in the occupied territories, and more Arab protest demonstrations are certain.

NOTES

Jordanian King Husayn
*will be in Damascus to-
day for one of his peri-
odic policy consulta-
tions with Syrian Pres-
ident Asad.*

The two leaders are likely to dis-
cuss Husayn's recent trip to the
US, the Lebanese situation, and
Syria's attitude toward renewing
the mandate of the UN observer
forces on the Golan Heights. The
present mandate expires on May 30.

They may also discuss the current
status of the Jordan-US Hawk mis-
sile deal. The visit to Jordan
later this month of the chief of
the Soviet air force was offi-
cially announced in Amman yester-
day. The visit is intended to be
another warning that Husayn could
turn to the USSR if the deal with
the US fails.

The press has speculated that Hu-
sayn and Asad might announce plans
for a confederation between Jordan
and Syria. Such a step would be
only symbolic, if it occurs at all.

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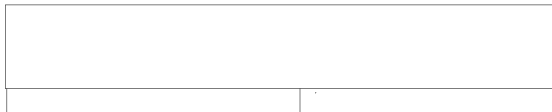
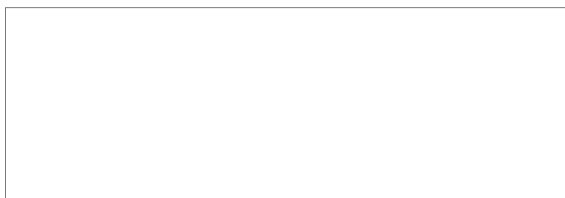
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Laos reaffirmed its in-
creasingly strong ties
with the USSR at the
end of Prime Minister
Kayson Phomvihan's
visit to Moscow on May
5.

During the two-week visit the two
sides signed a series of accords,
probably including a new Soviet
aid commitment. The extent of new
aid was not revealed, but in the
communique the Lao extravagantly
praised the Soviets for their as-
sistance and support. None of this
will help Laos' relations with
China.

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